

REWRITE



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"SHALL I SPECIALIZE?"

We are often asked this question by writers. Many authors lay great store by the ability they seem to possess of selling one, specialized type of ms. merchandise. Several writers have told us recently that their intention in the near future is to specialize on a single kind of writing. Some think they can increase their volume this way and others that they will work up to higher payments per ms. A few give a better reason, a liking for that particular type of writing.

It is one thing to write because you love it and would not be happy doing any job but writing. It is another to be writing murder stories because you believe that's a trend, and you will make the most money out of it. There are two laws that apply in such cases. One is the law of diminishing returns. Most human beings grow tired of doing some identical job repeatedly ad infinitum. To keep from going crazy, you have to invent technical variations or discover new possibilities in the chore, fresh facets that intrigue the imagination. But then you are getting off a specialist's unvarying pattern and perfecting uniformity. You are becoming individualized again.

The second law is that there is only one, unchanging principle in life, the principle of change. Therefore, if you specialize too expertly, you must be prepared to pay whatever penalty arises; and the commonest usually is to be left high on the beach by the receding tide. Right now, almost every form of entertainment seems to be pre-occupied to the exclusion of all else in crime drama. I believe, however, we are going to find some day that there's no market for this violent & brutalized entertainment genre. On the contrary, there will be a revulsion to it. Then where will the specialists in that particular field be?

We have always stressed the importance of writers having something to say, and saying it well. We believe that writers most often write well when they write about what their sub-conscious tells them they know best and are most interested in. That does not inevitably mean the background against which they have lived. Here the law of opposites often applies. The Navy gets many of its best recruits from inland cities and towns. Major league ball is frequently played by fellows who grew strong on farms. Having "something to say" depends primarily on vitality, inner aliveness and the perspective acquired by a good deal of meditation and quiet "thinking through".

So, our secondary interest in a writer is usually to help him grow, to find the sense of maturity that is every man's birthright. The specialist tends to know more and more about less and less. Followed to excess, this

practice is likely to be as destructive and unrewarding as the other extreme, scattering and diffusing one's powers. In our long experience we have found that it doesn't matter too much where a writer begins, so long as he does begin and starts to develop that talent with which he is equipped.

Of course one has to be practical. There's little sense in trying to write fiction, if first of all you do not know how to write—period. With great difficulty, we have many times persuaded writers, who had their eyes on the big sums paid for slick fiction, they should first learn to write a simple, direct reportorial account of a happening or a feature article.

If one really needs money, he owes it, as the saying is, to himself to learn the quickest and easiest method of making any money. But just as insistently, he should not permit that necessity to make him a money pursuer. I have seen many a writer overlook his best chances because he was too intent on being a success in the one way he has himself mapped out. Murray Hoyt, a member of the WCS Family, has well said that "Nothing ever happens the way you expect it."

If you are a specialist, you are extremely likely to pass up the opportunities that you as a plain, unadorned writer would snap up as new and valuable experience. I remember working with a writer who was shooting, and shooting hard, for the slicks or nothing. But she would not learn to be a writer, period, first. She had "learned that" in years of writing for the pulps. She was writing "for money", so she muffed the openings that save her valuable chances to break in; she side-tracked herself from the job of growing inside. After all, one of the things a writer for the slicks sells, even the most commercial writer, is his maturity, his ability to comment upon and interpret the life he pictures. A specialist, who has nothing but an amazing technique and an assortment of stock characters, soon is passe, washed up.

It is surprising how if you start to be a writer almost anywhere along the line, soon opportunities begin to open up. Ideas beget ideas; sales, even small ones, lead to other sales. You cast your bait out on the water and it comes back to you, often in different "catches" from what you expected. An editor says, "I can't use that, but why not try me on this?" Or you get a new plan; you re-angle your material and it sells. Writer friends, or readers read your stuff, and come up with valuable suggestions, or ideas no good in themselves, but which start your think machine working and—presto!

Nature has a way of setting up the opportunity you can handle. The main thing is to be in there pitching. A writer told me yesterday: "I can't write 'em fast enough now."

REWRITE

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<u>MAKE</u>	<u>William E. Harris,</u>	<u>HELP MEN</u>
<u>THE U.N.</u>	<u>Elva Ray Harris,</u>	<u>TO LIVE</u>
<u>STRONG.</u>	<u>Editors.</u>	<u>IN PEACE</u>

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Thank you for your Christmas greetings.

May the New Year bring you all Peace, Happiness and Success in your writing. As you develop yourself both as a person & writer, you will be helping yourself and your Country.

TRUE FREEDOM IS OUR GREATEST WEAPON

Whatever our own mistakes as a nation, it is obvious the free world cannot do business with the Russian Politburo. Nor will we win or break up the present world stalemate until we take the offensive, an offensive, incidentally, of determined peacefulness, and goodwill. We will not get anywhere by waiting for the enemies of the free world to be sensible, neighborly and to turn over a new leaf. They have no intention of doing so.

They intend to dominate the world. Time is on their side. They are willing to wait for their opportunities, to take advantage of our mistakes. They have undertaken a calculated campaign of breeding uncertainty, confusion and panic in our ranks. They are infiltrating our position everywhere exactly, and as persistently, as they did in Korea.. And will do everywhere where we are willing to waste our substance fighting with allies whom they sacrifice as so much surplus, unnecessary materiel.

Against such an enemy we must wage a genuine peace offensive. We must be strong with a powerful armed force, yes. But we must also be united in our aims, have the courage, the faith and the determination to win. It's

not warfare in the old fashioned manner, of two armies lining up and slugging it out. Or of mobile tank and plane warfare, such as the German war machine methodically plotted out, and then executed for the most part mechanically.

No, it is psychological warfare, hit-and-run stuff. Infiltration, sabotage, and then disappear. It is a rat plague, which therefore, must be dealt with just as our Middle Western farmers cut down a plague of grasshoppers or rats: slow, scientific extermination. Step-by-step, square-foot-by-square-foot; relentless, remorseless. We must utilize all of our scientific know-how, & back it up with every ounce of our determination to remain free. Panic and foolish waste, or confused, unrealistic use of our resources, I can assure you are our only enemies. We can be defeated only if we allow the insidious, the dangerous enemies within (Inflation, political opportunists and selfish interests) to dominate our economy and our over-all defense plan.

We must never forget that important as it is, armed force is only one of our defenses. We must act democracy, and peace, as well as merely talk it. Everywhere, we must put people first, and vested property rights second. It is the people of all the world, including those behind the Iron Curtains in both West and East, with whom we can do business. Do not forget for a minute that there is a vital difference between this world war and the two we fought with Germany. Our enemy theoretically is smarter, but there is one lesson that 25 years of bloody dictatorship has taught men everywhere. We can infiltrate. We can adopt commando methods, for which American sports training, such as football, baseball and other games of physical skill, and daring, heads up thinking, give us a marked advantage.

And so our first two jobs, aside from the armed forces, are (1) to clean out the rats in our own buildings; and (2) give every encouragement to the white, clean rats behind the Iron Curtains. In a friendly, peace-loving manner, let us root out the traitors. He who is not with us is against us. But we are a Christian people. It is our vaunt that men are innocent until they are proved guilty & that every man's right to worship the faith of his fathers shall not be impaired. Where our enemies stage rigged trials, let us hold honest ones. Where men such as those reported about on P. 15 honestly dissent from armed service, let us require them to do peace service with no discrimination as to loyalty. Let us lean over backwards, not to make dishonorable peace with an enemy, but to make democracy a real and vital tower of strength, a glorious shelter for all men of good will wherever they be.

By bringing real freedom and democracy to the Philippines, to all the threatened free peoples, we can unseat dictators everywhere.

REWRITE

FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Ray Harris

WHAT CONSTITUTES A POEM?

The question has been asked, "Is the stuff I write poetry, or is it merely verse?" It's a question that I suppose every poets faces at some time or other. A few writers are constantly plagued by the fear that their work is not measuring up to the standards, which they hope to achieve.

So many factors enter into this problem it is impossible to give a flat yes or no reply. Moreover, it is an even more difficult problem than it was one hundred and fifty years ago. Then, one could, by the process of elimination get a little nearer to a conclusion than he can today. First, a piece had to have meter in order to be properly called either verse or poetry. Free verse and its rhythm, puzzling to many, hadn't yet made its appearance. It is doubtful, too, whether any piece in which letters of the alphabet and punctuation marks were used unconventionally would have for a moment been considered as poetry.

Now there is much more freedom in a technical sense in building a poem, all of which makes it more difficult to distinguish differences between verse and prose. When Wordsworth lived one could first determine into which of those categories his writing fell, and then go on to the question as to whether it was verse or poetry. The prose could, obviously, be eliminated by applying a yardstick of meter and the question accordingly narrowed. Now all three must be considered, and simultaneously at that.

But underneath the basic question is still the same. And it is what my questioner is being bothered by. That is, assuming that a poem meets all the technical standards, what is the thing that sets it apart from all the inconsequential verse that is being written today? How does one analyze that extra spark, that lifts it above hum-drum workaday verse?

There is a great difference of opinion on that question. What one person calls true poetry another calls sentimental drivel. So, the answer for the individual poet lies in the audience he is writing for and also in himself. The average factory worker sees no poetry in Milton or T.S. Eliot. But he or she, perhaps, might truly find poetry in a newspaper column or some magazine picked up casually. And who's to say they are wrong? Another level of audience would exclaim loudly over the beauty in e.e.cummings' combinations of letters and punctuation marks, yet others would see nothing in them but a bunch of unrelated hieroglyphics.

The number of books being written to help readers to appreciate modern poetry indicate there is a vast audience that would vote against the moderns, should the question be asked—

"Is their poetry 'great'?" It is doubtful if even time will decide which of these actually wrote poetry, and which verse. Good prose, good poetry and good verse alike have stood up against the test of time. And don't you admit to having read some things that the old masters handed down to us, which you do not consider true poetry?

The only answer I can personally give that would be any good to more than a handful of people is this. Find out who your audience, the body of readers you are going to reach, is likely to be, and what standards you are to hold yourself to. There are available in libraries and book stores sets of books in which poets have tried to set down what they believe constitutes poetry. Two that come immediately to my mind and which are available in the WCS Circulating Library, are: "Writing Your Poem" by Lawrence John Zillman and "Mid-Century American Poets" by John Ciardi. In the latter Ciardi as editor holds the chair while fifteen poets, all prominent within the last ten years, each devote a chapter to isolating the elements of good poetry. Zillman also conducts a poets' forum, which has for its content excerpts from the critical, defining writing of older poets. It starts with what William Wordsworth had to say, in 1800. Many poets set forth their ideas about writing in the prefaces to their own volumes.

Read what these poets say, and read their poetry. In fact, read a lot of the poetry—that you like and desire to emulate. Find out what standards guided these poets, & if you think they are worthy, try to make them your own.

Learn all you can about the techniques of the poets you admire, and also of those you dislike. Use them yourself as well as you can for practice, even if you ultimately decide to cast them aside. Do your best and you do not need to worry about whether you're writing verse or poetry. Remember that if you always write well in kind, you have done a good job and that is the important thing. For it is true that that extra something often gets into your lines while your mind is focussed on writing well.

But if you are worried and unsure of yourself, take heart because it's a good sign it is a sign of growth. As you grow, your standards will change. What you thought was good poetry at one stage in your development as a poet, you will consider merely verse at another. All of which is proof that you are—moving forward in the direction of doing better things. Good luck and happy growing, in 1951.

THE STANDARD DICTIONARY OF FOLKLORE, MYTHOLOGY & LEGEND. Ed. Maria Leach. Fung & Wagstaffs Co. Vol. II (J-Z). \$7.50. (2 Volumes, boxed, \$15.00.) Alphabetically stored repository of a lot of valuable information. The writer who wishes to find leads for historical features, will discover many here.

REWRITE

ALONG THE WRITING FRONT

ATLANTIC "Firsts", ATLANTIC MONTHLY, 8 Arlington St., Boston 10, Mass., are starting their 6th year this month. In 3 years 51 of these mss. running from 2,000 to 15,000 words in length, have been printed. Full details by writing in, but "Atlantic First" should, naturally, be written on the first page of a ms. Special preference given in payments.

FARM JOURNAL and COUNTRY CHRISTIAN, which use check-lists to indicate reasons for rejection, both reported recently that they're overstocked on poetry. Suggestion: try magazines of this kind two or three times yearly at intervals with your very best material. Also study the book to see what they're doing. FJ has been using poetry pages which represented a special group of farm or club women recently. That slows down consumption of general free lance verse.

Investigating the rumor that Margery Mansfield was planning to publish a "new poetry magazine", we found that: Kelly Janes, Miss Mansfield's husband, is already publishing a small hand-printed magazine, SHADE. Second issue, dated April, actually appeared in August. The third is "to be dated about June". There won't be much room for outside contributors, according to the editor. - -

Now is the time to be getting autumn mss. into the hands of editors.

Just before Christmas two appealing fund-raising letters came to our desk. The first was the famous Perkins Institution & Massa. School for the Blind, Watertown 72, Mass., which is now helping handicapped children of other countries besides our own. Best part of this deaf-blind work is that Perkins has a lot to do with extending the work all over the U. S., and foreign lands, too.

The second appeal was made by James M. Jacobson, v.p. of POCKET BOOKS, for the National Jewish Hospital, Denver, Colo., that has a slogan: "None may enter who can pay, None can pay who enter". A non-sectarian TB center for treatment, research, education, and rehabilitation, 65% of its patients are non-Jewish. You can have a lot more fun investing in human beings instead of Television.

Federal Trade Commission. A trial examiner's initial decision would require H. Harold Becko & Harold's Studio, Winona, Minn., to continue unfair & deceptive practices in the sale of photographs & enlargements.

FTC announced it is investigating the now famous "child appeal" TV ads. (PATHFINDER stated (Nov. 29) that Angelo Patri returned his \$1,000 fee for praising TV! Shocking! Ed.)

Harry A. Burch, Western Training Service, & National Training Service, Seattle, Wash., has had a complaint issued against him by FTC charging misrepresentation.

SOME NEWS AND VIEWS

THEATRE AMERICANA, Jane Ray, 2208 New York Drive, Altadena, California, offers \$100 to playwright of a play (3 acts) on the American scene or by American authors. A production in a little theater (amateur) does not disqualify. Closes: February 1, 1951.

Sydney Hillman Foundation, Inc., 15 Union Square, NYC 3. Seven awards (\$500) in seven fields. Inquire. Closes: February 1, 1951.

Writing About Writing. Showing the importance writing holds in the minds of average men and women, WCS Family members sent us a tearsheet of three separate columns written by popular newspaper columnists in Mass., Pa., and on the West Coast. Each dealt with some phase of the tendency for everyone to think of himself as a potential writer. In general the tone of these three columns was facetious or scornful of the bothersome amateur trying to edge in and compete with a serious group of professionals. (Neither the thinking or the writing of these pieces was very hot.)

It seems to me that no matter how unskillful the execution, the impulse of thousands to "take pen in hand and write" is one form of our democracy at work. Voting is another. Of course some are prompted by the thoughts of easy money and vain notoriety. But where a sincere interest in self-expression about the problems of the day exists, there is an attempt to increase and give vitality to public opinion. Right or wrong, the contributors bring fresh ideas and it is by churning these over in our minds and discussions that we achieve still better ones and progress.

The ANONYME WORKSHOP, Mr. G. M. Jackson., 32 Edgewood Ave., Mill Valley, Cal., is offering 2 \$5 prizes for the best "poetic portrait". This is the winter activity. Anonymous handling by the clerk. Membership fee of 25¢ and a self-addressed, stamped envelope required. No mss. returned, but poets retain all rights. Prizes given anonymously.

GIMIS, Howland Magazine Co., 410 Lexington Ave., NYC, is reported by a correspondent to be returning mss. with the notation (by the P. O.) "Refused. Return to Sender".

Late in November the UNH Conference Family suffered a stunning loss. "Bob" Neal, the staff expert on newspaper and feature writing and one of the most popular personalities on our part of the Campus, committed suicide. Ill health and a driving schedule apparently were the causes. He will be sorely missed. Helen Neal, his wife, and a member of the WCS Family, has been making her by-line one that is remembered in numerous magazines.

It seems almost superfluous to suggest to a serious writer, but we run across the results frequently, that he should always keep a carbon of everything he writes.

REWRITE

MAKE THE READER FEEL HE WAS THERE

A big name editor told one of our Ganz recently that his article though interesting, was not good enough. The reader, he said, is certain to pick up the fact that you havent actually talked with your subject, although you have corresponded with him. Years ago, I did an interview that way with the late Ralph Henry Barbour, a famous writer for boys and at one time my idol as a story-teller. The piece was published, but it failed, because Barbour couldn't give out on how he wrote & I was unable to prod or needle him.

But I still maintain that is not the real reason why the member of our WCS Family did not make his character come alive. Mine was a straight informative interview, while his was a dramatized semi-fiction piece. It did not matter one darn whether he had actually seen and talked with his subject. Of course that might make it easier. But I have written in REWRITE several times about articles I have written about distinguished folk who died before I was in my 'teens. Yet I forced writers who admired my subjects to write me and tell me I had made those men live.

The secret of such writing lies within an author himself. You yourself have to "feel" the warm, intimate sense of drama and color and the spirit of the man and his era which you seek to portray. And this is true whether the time be past, present or future. The editor, not being a technician, felt, as so many editors do, the weakness, but he could not put his finger exactly on the trouble.. The piece is usually just not written "well enough". On my desk now are stories returned by the editors of the SEP & LH. "We like this piece," they both said, "but it doesn't hit us in this office hard enough."

In all such cases, you, the author, failed to catch fire. You have not touched your reader with the spark that lights a fire of enthusiasm. Your ms. is not contagious. Doesn't sweep the reader off his feet with that excitement, that mystery and drama, that is inherent in your material, if you are a good picker, or is put there by sheer technique, if you are a swell story-teller. Your imagination must be good enough to make dramatic pictures that allow the reader to assume that he is actually standing beside the MC, living his dramatic trials and successes as if they were his own.

Partly that is dependent upon your ability to see and thin and feel with your senses —all of them, not just your eyes and ears, mind. You have got to be able to imagine how it would be to live within the shell of bone and skin that constitutes your subject. And also all of the people he comes in physical contact with. You have got to be so emotionally adaptable that you can relive the life of another, of many others so sympathetically that there is no perceptible difference, to the naked eye between the original & the

carbon copy.

Partly it is a technical trick. The right use of words that convey your meaning, feeling and the vivid dramatic pictures that excite your reader's nerves. Recently a neighbor handed us a current issue of CORNET. I was leafing my way through it from the back when I saw the final picture in a photo-story sequence. It was a glamorous, black velvet-clad mannequin posing in a very come-on pose over the back of a luxurious lounge. I retraced the steps leading up to this pose, in reverse order, observing the careful way that a masculine director transformed a very ordinary looking model into a rapturous siren. Every step was considered and ideas accepted or rejected. A wisp of black hair was hung in just the right angle of enchantingly provoking disarray. Allure was built up, step by step. Under the final picture there was a sermonic cut-line commenting on a nonchalant, casual, intimate pose that was actually anything but any of those adjectives. In reality it was a tour de force arranged, remember, with consummate, calculated precision. But that was not the effect on a reader.

In telling my friend about this experience I cautioned him: "You can achieve this type of writing because you can dramatize better than I can. Therefore, there is no reason if you learn to handle it properly, why you cannot be a big time writer in both the fiction and non-fiction slick fields. It is simply, and solely, a matter of getting that same identical calculated insouciance and smooth, precise use of words, which was achieved in materials by the photographic director.

But remember this, I added. You will stay up there as long as the warm, intimate emotional feeling remains real for your reader. The instant that becomes mannered and the artifice begins to show through, you're a dead duck, a goner. You will begin to slip back, into the minor leagues, if you do not begin to be seized by panic and go completely dry. That has been the fate of more than one author, who became acclimated to big checks & a fat living; who thought he was God & could turn the trick whenever he wished to switch on the spigot. That is the trick that writers whose stories are included in the quality anthologies always overlook. They turn up their collective noses at the commercial writers for being formulaized. But they do not stop to realize that the best of technicians in the slick field can not only do the remembered cartwheel around them, but also, and this is important, interpret life just as well. Actually, I believe the commercial author sweats out his illusion of genuineness a great deal harder than the quality writer.. For he knows once his technical skill shows through, he's through.

To sum it, you need to achieve a sense of urgency for the editor by making him "feel" the immediacy, the warm, intimate realness, the vivid sliveness of your ms. That's Art.

REWRITE

WRITING IN A CONTROLLED ECONOMY

This is being written on the eve of President Truman's proclamation to the Nation of a national emergency. Undoubtedly the situation is worsening; it will be worse before it is better. It has been said that men and women of my generation, who have endured at least two world wars, may not live to see a peaceful era again. Certainly not one where the individual has much freedom to live and express himself as freely as did my generation in its youth, or the preceding generation through most of its lifetime.

In the face of such a situation the writer must learn to live from day to day, take advantage of every minute, every crumb of detail he can use to promote the ideas, freedom and faith he believes in. He must surely have tremendous courage, resignation, be willing to undertake as if they were certain to be completed, projects that may seem not to have a chance of ever being finished. No "let's sit on our hands and wait and see."

It goes without saying that he should be a loyal citizen, do all he can to advance the public welfare and defense. But he must not forget for a minute that he is an "American citizen" with all the rights and privileges that that implies. He is also a writer. The man or woman who helps to cut red tape, petty officialdom's sense of self-importance & gets good things done quickly, quietly, and efficiently, certainly is a patriotic citizen of the first water.

Writers can do an unequalled service by a continued definition, clarification and reiteration of the basic ideas and ideals the remainder of the nation must use to live by and to fight by. Writers are the cops beside fire-lines, who instill confidence, prevent panic and are morale-builders in times of a public emergency. By standing fast, holding firm to the eternal verities, they can do a great deal to help lick the kind of enemy we now face. Clear, logical thinking, practical and constructive suggestions at the right moment, can often turn the tide of battle.

Writers can do this by their letters published in the local weekly newspaper, or on a radio network. They can do it by the feature articles they write or the news reports they file. And by the short stories & books they write. Emphasis will naturally be on a constructive, practical interpretation. The editorial offices being short of paper, and personnel, the smart writer will compress & tighten his thoughts. He will do all he can to make his mss. easy to read and edit. He will try to reduce the routine housekeeping that an editor has to do to make a ms. ready for the printer. By leaving plenty of white space at the top of his first page and wide margins on the rest, he can help a lot. And by studying with an eagle eye every communication he receives from editors, and picking up the little tricks they use, learning

what they like, need or do not want, he can ingratiate himself with an editor and train the latter to depend upon him. Miss Temple's suggestion (see P. 14) is an excellent hint as to the way editors sometimes think aloud and offer writers valuable experience. Here at the REWRITE office, we read a lot of editorial letters sent to our friends. I find I invariably read these twice, and quite often pick up a useful crumb I missed the first time.

Writing under wartime controls will not be easy. Some people are saying it won't be as easy as in the 1940-45 period. They say that restrictions will be tighter and the Government won't do as much for the book industry to get books for the armed forces. There'll be fewer titles and more of these printed. And the magazine market will be tighter and unpredictable, since the editors will be doing the best they can under handicaps. Much of the stuff used will be bought on a short notice basis, because editors will be adapting themselves to changing conditions.

The big thing though, will be that Americans will have to read to keep their courage up, as they did in the last war. Good humor and legitimate entertainment will be highly prized, and will be valued by Washington as a means of keeping the morale sustained. So writers who can write, and can entertain the rest of the nation, will find themselves as busy as ever. Writers will have a big job to do, and an opportunity facing them, even if they have to do it under difficulties. The main thing is to keep planning, keep at work and keep the production flowing, improving.

SOME NEWS AND VIEWS

The Protestant Christian Church took a big step forward last month. The formation of the National Council of Churches of Christ in America is a step that many lay and even clerical leaders have felt was long over-due. It enables 25 Protestant and 4 Orthodox Churches while maintaining their independent character, to work together. Eleven inter-denominational organizations will merge their activities. That is as it should be. Christ wanted all of us to act as brothers and to work together. That is the only way we will have Peace and an opportunity for all men to take a rightful place in the world.

The Catholic Press Association, James F. Kane, 120 Madison Ave., NYC 17, has announced prizes of \$600, \$300 and \$100 for fictional pieces not over 7,000 words in length. Competition is open only to Catholic writers. A theme consonant with Catholic principles is required. Publication rights retained by the authors, but mss. must not be sold, or published prior to announcements of the prize-winners on May 17, 1951. Closes: as of midnight, March 15, 1951.

Please RENEW your subscription to REWRITE promptly. It will help us to help you.

REWRITE

BEING FUNNY IS SERIOUS BUSINESS

One of the hardest things to teach, or to talk about is humor. That is because what's funny to one person is not to another. Also, humor is evanescent and as intangibly tangible as the steam you can see escaping from a kettle, but which you can never pick up in your hand. Try to analyze it and it immediately evaporates into thin air. And yet you need to understand it, if you are to use it effectively.

The ability to handle humor is as essential to a writer as the ability to read lines is to an actor. It is your greatest "stock-in-trade" even though you may not be a serious specialist in fun-making. This is very true because humor is the warming, lumbently persuading intoxicant that reduces readers from suspicious potential enemies to as kindly, loyal sympathizers as you could desire. Every door-to-door salesman knows the effectiveness of a good "ice-breaker". Most showmen plant it deliberately in the initial five minutes of their dialogue. And just to make sure that they capture the most recalcitrant audience, they conceal several of these humor-lines in the opening scene, and vary them enough to win any type of group.

Any definition of humor is useless. no amount of didactic explanation will give you a sure-fire blueprint. All that we can do is to try to understand the underlying principles. And it must be fairly evident that it is the happy blending of an absurd thought, or situation with the sudden shock of a surprise that touches off a gale of laughter. I can illustrate this idea very simply by the compliment that was paid me recently.

We had been making several trips to a hen-farm in search of manure for our garden. On the way home Elva told me that our friend's wife had confided to her the man's estimate of me. "I like that feller," he said, "even if he is educated." If you want the confirming Q. E. D. on this principle, just add in the one word "highly" immediately preceding "educated". See how the line becomes literary and loses its tang.

Most farces are based on a deliberate accentuation or plausible distortion of a ridiculous situation. Take the famous old stage favorite, "Charley's Aunt". It is simply the exaggeration of the idea that girls mustn't be found in a boys' dormitory unchaperoned. To heighten the fun, we take away the right chaperon and have one of the boys masquerade as a gray-haired woman. Then we bring on the strait-laced principal and the fun is on. A dramatist merely has to flash the "comical" figure again and again in front of the audience and tease the spectators by making the chances of the boyish aunt escaping discovery seem progressively slimmer.

One of the basic ingredients of humor always has been the play on words or ideas. A

pun may be the lowest form of wit, but it is endlessly appealing to the largest number of readers. Just now our Billy 'Gee is delighted with the little hen that found an orange in the nest and ran screaming to tell every brother and sister: "Come see the orange Mama laid." Again, note what putting the word "that" after "orange" would do.

Fred Allen used that same kind of a humor line in the Tallulah Bankhead show (December 3rd), but it required more intelligence. It was really a very skilful idea pun. He told Margaret Truman she should have a program of her own. She fed him a straight that carried the springboard for three laugh-lines. It said something about her being just an amateur, not being able to read lines, & having no experience. I do not recall the first of the three laugh-lines, but the second played with the idea of radio comedians reading scripts instead of reading lines. Then the adroit Mr. Allen topped the series with the best one: "But Margaret," he murmured ingratiatingly, "You say you have no-experience. Why then you should be in Television." (Just stop and count the overtones there and see the several ways that remark can be taken as funny. It is really very acute criticism.)

There are a number of precautions a comedian must take into account. Fred Allen could easily have been bitter. Then that line almost certainly would have been "cold". Some of the kidding Miss Truman received on the same program was in bad taste. She is the daughter of the President. When Fred Allen wheedled her for some influence with a succession of decreasingly important personages, ending up with a night court outside of Nutley, N.J., he was not being very funny. That joke, you see, depended on a sheer technical "device", a ridiculous series leading up to an unexpected twist. But neither the twist nor the basic situation were in themselves funny, so the humor of the device did not register.

A joke that is out of character will never go over. Miss Bankhead in introducing her special star, engaged in what was intended to be a stereotyped "cat-fight" between two women jealous of each other's attempt to outdo the other in striking gowns. But because the lines played up Miss Bankhead's egotism and because one of the participants was inexperienced, just herself, the other blase & sophisticated, the scene backfired. Moreover, when Miss Bankhead complimented Margaret's gown and the script called for Margaret not to reply in kind, it represented the kind of meanness and sophisticated gag that was out of character for a girl like Margaret, who also happened to be the daughter of the president. It was in bad taste.

Elva offered a further distinction, as we were discussing the serious business of being funny. She recalled a joke I considered funny when I was Billy 'Gee's age, and which

REWRITE

he chuckled over the first time he heard it. About the chap who called on his girl. She told him she could not come down, she was taking a bath. "Oh, slip on anything," he urged, "and come down." So she slipped on the—soap and came down. Crude, yes, but it's not nearly as offensive as one might think, if he stops to visualize the literal details. It is "funny" like the sight of someone slipping on banana peel. (Why were the old custard pie comedies funny at the moment of the first impact of the first pie, but not when repeated ad infinitum?)

In contrast to this joke consider the so-called "Little Willie" verses, or even some of the little Audrey jests. Remember little Willie swallowing the thermometer and falling into the fireplace? It takes a "rugged" sense of humor to laugh over these lines. A distorted sense of the inappropriate, so to speak. This is a specialized type of humor, a bit on the sadistic side. Therefore, you'd have to know your audience well before trying such a joke out.

On the other hand, you as a writer should bear in mind that the more experienced, the more seasoned you become, the harder it will be for you to laugh spontaneously. So many of the jokes you hear will be "oldies". Or, being familiar with so much of the technical tricks and devices of being professionally a humorous writer, certain types of humor will no longer seem funny to you. It is then you need to keep in mind the excellent comment, which Elva made concerning the ever changing generations for whom humor is written. Our Billy 'Gee is laughing now over the identical jokes Elva and I laughed over a generation previously. These corny and childishly amusing bits of humor are just that to most adults now, but they're brand new to Billy. His ability to laugh at them gives him that all important sense of superiority and, consequently, security that all of us need.

Perhaps we can best sum up this point by a very ancient definition. The perfect gentleman, according to one school of thought, is the man who can put a companion at ease—by laughing at an inappropriate old chestnut as if he had never in his life heard it before. It requires human understanding as well as a skilled technique to accomplish such a feat authentically. It takes similar skill & talent to tell a joke (or story) effectively.

But the real secret of being effective in print or on the stage is nothing more actually than being in tune or harmony with the particular audience facing you. And you can achieve this most only by proving you're the master of the situation. Every audience desires to be led, to experience the release, which comes when someone else carries on his shoulders the responsibility of the show, & at the same time fills you with a warm feeling of competence. So that you can relax, & sit back and be stimulated, while he points the way.

It is up to the story-teller therefore, to know what he is about. Humor, the ice-breaker can set the stage for you, give you an effective entrance, as it were. After that you are on your own, you have got to make good. And you can do it only by sheer competence. But if you have established contact with an audience, you can do this quite easily. All you need is: (1) to have something to say—something worth saying; (2) to say it simply and logically; and (3) to give it all the impact of your own enthusiasm and eloquence—that with imagination and professional cunning you can summon up.

The three steps in humor are nothing more than the one, two-punch, that every competent writer knows is the eternal formula of skilled writing. First, the springboard. Pat and Mike were walking down the street. It's as easy as that. A short, sharp, arresting, eye-halting narrative hook. Second, the development. You sketch in as quickly as possible the essential details. Nothing that's extraneous; each detail building to a higher level of interest; everything offhand, yet calculated to tease the reader or listener, to build the suspense.

Then, the sudden, surprising punch-line—bang! Often, the very nonchalance, the quiet, natural, unadramatic manner in which it's rammed home, is your most effective weapon. If you can make your words flow effortlessly right up to the final word that contains all the meaning, you will hear the "roar of the crowd". And believe me it is music, rich music, in the ears of any actor, whether he stands before an audience or sits alone before a typewriter.

Here's one to illustrate the one, two, three principle. And it is perhaps more effective because it deals with stereotyped figures & stock humor instead of original characters, and a unique situation. The professional is always aware that these are often more powerful, if he can give them fresh treatment, than less familiar novelties. (Why is it everyone starts to laugh in confident anticipation when you mention "women drivers")?

"Well, dear," sighed the head of the house after viewing the crumpled fender, "did the officer scold you for hitting one of the city's trees?"

"No, he was just lovely, John," explained the new driver. "He said the city planted them just to keep lady drivers from getting up on people's porches."

CORONET via C.S. MONITOR

Study that one very carefully. Notice the number of cliché phrases. Count them. Also find any extra and unnecessary words if you can. Note how much is left out in the way of explanation because the clichés provide overtones. Note how the absurdity has been underplayed by the quiet use of words.

REWRITE

NEWS FOR WRITERS

The City of Paris, France will celebrate, throughout 1951, its 2,000th birthday. Committee in charge of the festivities is headed by Jules Romains, member of the Academie Francaise. We suggest that here is a "news-peg" on which to hang a number of good feature articles, poems, etc. Do not wait till the bloom is off, though. The French Cultural Service, 934 5th Ave., NYC, is a helpful source of material and pictures, we believe, if you have an original idea. But don't expect them to write your stories for you.

ST. JOSEPH NEWS. St. Joseph, Missouri, is a market for children's poems, according to Lola Beall Graham. "They are especially interested in 4-line poems at this time. They pay \$1 each." (NOTE: this is not ST. JOSEPH Magazine, Rev. Albert Bauman, St. Benedict, C.R., which buys articles and poetry, "not specifically Catholic", but suitable to Catholics reading a family magazine. It is said to pay well.

The ATLANTIC MONTHLY is reported starting a circulation campaign, built on rented lists. Ours was requested, but isn't for sale.

THIS AFFECTS YOU

The Christophers appear to be going into publishing in a big way. The details that we print in the center box, are of interest to every writer. While this may be a specialized publication, it's competition: (1) It ties up to a certain extent publication facilities that might otherwise be available to you; (2) it attracts readers' dollars, and reading time you are seeking to command; and (3) it makes it necessary for other books to spend more money on promotion to attract the same amount of attention. Incidentally, the outlay of \$18,000 referred to, is largely made possible by the general public (including perhaps you?) through donations and gift subscriptions to the other Christopher publications.

Understand I am not attacking the Christophers. This is undoubtedly a worthy cause.. But it is competition to all writers. It is also vanity publishing in the sense that it requires "author participation" in the promotion and financial underwriting. To a degree it lets the cat out of the bag by disclosing that at least one of the so-called, generally accepted "reputable" publishers allows use of its name and facilities in such a manner... Undoubtedly others do also.

Actually, this kind of a "deal" can be extremely popular and profitable to the "publisher". He puts up little or no money him-

self; there is no risk, yet he earns a nice financial return for the use of his press & staff. This book, although propaganda in behalf of the good life and the civilization, which we all wish to see defended, is probably a good book. It should be published.

But within the past few weeks I have noticed other books published by other publishers describing and extolling the romantic history of several prominent American industrial empires; I saw one announced covering American Express. Presumably some of these have been financed. There exists a situation today where an industrial corporation can very profitably "lose" money publishing a profitable piece of publicity "literature," thereby holding its customers while it fills its share of defense contracts, & at the same time lessens its liability for high "corporation income" (surplus) taxes. Which is nice going—all around the mulberry bush, except for the taxpayers and the writers who did not write the literature.

The point I'm making is in no sense any aspersions against (1) the Christophers; (2) the corporations that are smartly aware of their opportunities; or (3) the publishers, who finance their other less popular books in this way. On the contrary all I am saying is that in the long run good publishers don't increase the stature of their firms or the authors they represent. Easy money is often weakening, debilitating money. If this device becomes generally popular, American publishing as a whole will suffer a decline. And certainly it will become more difficult for the promising young writers to appear in print. Why take the risk?

The great publishers have, without exception, been astute businessmen. They have known how to pick winners. But to their everlasting credit they have built reputations revered by other publishers because they had the courage to believe in unknown, or unpopular writers, and to back them over the years until the public was ready to admit their greatness. These are strange, and grievous times. But it gives wise men something to ponder that (1) the first Christopher book achieved its widespread popularity without this kind of commercial fanfare; (2) that a good cause is being put over by a vanity publishing routine; (3) that the publisher mentioned in the box, is also favorably known for its interest in publishing a large number of "first" novelists and of originating the practice of paying contributors to anthologies on a royalty basis as against a flat payment.

Truly, it is a topsy-turvy world and a man must think every issue through clearly.

REWRITE

THE MONTH'S NEW BOOKS

BAGHDAD: 1951. Herb Caen. Doubleday & Co. \$1.75. This is a vignette book (a slim 120 pages, too.) Written by a San Francisco columnist apparently seeking to combine Walter Winchell with C. Henry. (Out of respect to a gentle proofreader, our junior editor, a disrespectful adjective was omitted from the preceding sentence.) But such rewarmed cafe society trivia never seemed less likely as potential book material. Indeed, it is a puzzle why volume ever found its way into print.

THE WRITER'S MARKET. Ed. Ruth A. Jones. The Writer's Digest. \$3.50. Rather belately, we have received a review copy of this large and helpful, but not complete market list. It's copyrighted "Sept., 1950". Test it almost anywhere against market date of your own and you'll be surprised at some of the facts previously listed in the Writer's DIGEST, that aren't automatically reported here. This is a useful and necessary tool for all writers, but it should be a lot better than it is.

Incidentally, it doesn't require much sleuthing to notice that some of the big name writers recommending the book, have been given a free copy and haven't taken the trouble and pains to check the book thoroughly. We consider this kind of advertising misleading & unfair to the inexperienced beginner. It is one of the reasons we refuse to endorse any service, or merchandise of any kind. Nevertheless, every serious writer should have a copy of this book or **THE WRITER'S HANDBOOK**, \$4.50. He should inter-line it with his own corrections, and should renew the book with a new edition periodically.

CAREERS THAT CHANGE YOUR WORLD. James Keller. Doubleday & Co. \$2.00. On another page, we have showed that the Christophs having powerful financial resources not accessible to ordinary free lances, have been successful in giving this book the advantage of an amazing initial promotion. As a book reviewer let me quickly state that this is a very important and exciting book. It applies the Communistic technique of missionary indoctrination to constructive Christian living. It shows any person, big or little, how he can with a small amount of imagination and logical thinking, get worthwhile objectives accomplished. Writers especially will find the techniques, the sources of information, and bibliographies at the end of each section, a very valuable training school. I wish in all sincerity that such a book had existed when I was a boy beginning life. A **WRITERS' BOOK CLUB** Selection. (Especially recommended.)

THE HIGHWAY OF PRINT. Ruth Ure. Friendship Press. \$2.50. This is a real study of "Production & Distribution of Christian Literature"

IMPORTANT PRIZE AWARDS

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Frieder Award Committee, 3 East 65th St., NYC 21, is offering \$5,000 for the best novel—with a Jewish theme. Rinehart & Co. will do the publishing. A folder and entry blank on request to the above. Closes: Nov. 15, 1951.

The Poetry Society of America, att: Candace Stevenson, 50 East 72nd St., NYC 21, offers the annual Albert Ralph Korn \$100 Lyric Prize Award. All poets eligible to send in not over 3 poems anonymously; length: not over 56 lines. Mark: "Korn Award". Closes: February 1, 1951.

Sheed & Ward, 830 Broadway, NYC 3, is the address, which doesn't appear in the central box. It is a prominent Catholic book publisher of excellent standing.

MODERN ROMANCES, Story Contest, 261 5th Ave., NYC 16, offers ten \$1,000 prizes again for stories, 12,000 - 20,000 words. Immediate payment 4¢ per word, remainder after contest closes. Further data from Contest Editor. Closes: March 15, 1951.

Yale Series of Younger Poets.. Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn. Book mss. may be submitted during February (Closes: March 1st) for this Award of many years' standing. Age limit is now forty and any poet not previously published is eligible to enter. Address the Editor.

Muhlenberg Press, 1228 Spruce St., Phila. 7, Pa., is offering \$5,000 for a book, fiction or biography, exemplifying good Christian living. Closes: March 31, 1951.

National WCTU Pub. House, Evanston, Ill., offers annual prizes for declamations. Folder sent for return postage. Closes: Mar. 31.

Denver POST, Sunday EMPIRE Magazine, will award \$300, \$150, \$50 (beyond regular pay) for 1,000 word short-shorts portraying life in the Rocky Mountains past, present, or future. Other mss. may be bought. Closes: February 4, 1951.

OUR DUMB ANIMALS, 180 Longwood Ave., Boston 15, Mass., offers 33 prizes in its annual "story-telling" photographic contest. A folder (return stamp) is available. Closes: June 1, 1950.

Poetry Society of Va., Capt. Paul C. Whitney 1305 Rockridge Ave., Norfolk, Va. Prize awards for all poets, Virginians and members of the Society. Last year the contest deadlines were: Feb. 1, and March 1, 1950. The current deadlines not available.

"ture" made for the Foreign Missions Conference of North America (1948). Valuable. It should be brought up to date periodically.

REWRITE

HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

Here are the acceptances reported to us in the past month:

Mary Grant Charles

Poems: Poetry CHAP BOOK, Midland Poetry REVIEW, National Parent-Teacher, Hartford TIMES.

Grace S. Minck

Articles: ST. JOSEPH'S, MOTELS & COURTS. Story: MAGNIFICAT. Poems: BETTER HOMES & GARDENS.

Bill Vinton

Article: OPEN ROAD.

Charles A. Cuneo

Article: OUR DUMB ANIMALS.

Winona Nichols

Article: THE WORK BASKET.

Kay Iill

Story: CHILD'S COMPANION.

Lillian Stickney

Articles: RURAL NEW YORKER and LITERARY FLORIDA.

Helen Langworthy

Article: The HOMEMAKER, "Women at Home" Column, TRUE EXPERIENCES.

Gertrude L. Durand

Poems: RURAL NEW YORKER, LYRIC, & AMERICAN WEAVE.

Send in your reports. It helps you: editors read this column. And writers can learn what markets are buying certain kinds of material.

Remember: we have a new service of answering questions about markets and the business of writing and selling. The fee is 25¢, per question. But we have not been requiring it when writers have sent in bona fide tips about markets, which we can add to the FILE. (Second hand or undated reports from others which cannot be substantiated, don't count.) We want the very best information, material the editors would agree is accurate, for our writers. An editor cannot argue with signed statements written by himself, for instance. Wherever possible, give us the actual statement, or an exact duplicate, dated. Reports of this kind will make you a better writer.

Thanks to the help of at least two of our friends, we have found a firm from which it is possible to obtain high grade typewriter ribbons and carbon paper. This firm is—the F. S. Webster Co., 1-23 Amherst St., Cambridge 42, Mass. An expensive ribbon, sometimes, is a money-saver, although the typewriter ribbons we are now using are not expensive as prices now run.

RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION Promptly, please.

EVEN AN AGENT CAN'T DO IT FOR YOU

Paper work is an important factor in your success as a writer. I want to show you how in a number of ways. Big businessmen talk a lot about the clean desks of smart managers and high salaried executives. The point, of course, is that a man with a clean desk can think more clearly and logically, and do it faster, if his desk is clear and neat. Some jobs require a lot of papers; but when they are done, file them or destroy the scratchings. Get ready for the next job.

We all of us need lots of papers. Materials from which we build. But once they have created a sense of clutter and over-powering detail, they have begun to have a deteriorating effect on your ability to think. Then is the time to have a weekly, monthly, annual clean-up. Put your desk and your mind in order by: (1) Elimination of the unnecessary and unused; (2) Classify what remains; and, (3) Use what you have left. Where you have 2 or more papers, pieces of information handy bring them together, combine them and hence simplify the materials your mind must react against.

It is better to save notes for a story or about research you have done, than to be sorry later that they are not available. There are many stories about authors who failed to keep a carbon of accepted stories or books, and later had to rewrite them when publishers lost them or had a fire. Sometimes carbon copies are the basis for a resale. Only yesterday a member of the WCS Family offered to buy a review copy of her first book—which we have in our WCS Library. Her publisher let the book go out of print. Not a copy can be found anywhere. (I told her we'd give her our copy, if necessary, but that I would prefer to loan it. We treasure books, which have a personal association for us.)

Don't forget that if you can prove you've worked on a book or important magazine story over a period of years (dated notes) you can stretch the income taxes on that ms. over as much as 36 months. (It should be much longer, where a man has had twenty years of unprofitable writing, then rings the bell & cashes in all at once.)

The Authors' League recently advised one of our friends that when he wishes to recall a ms. from one editor in order to make a sale with another, he should send a registered & return receipt requested letter to the editor or from whom he seeks a release. This is especially important where there is a question as to the reputability of the first editor. Suppose he has "moved—left no address". In such a case the unopened, returned & officially marked envelop postmarked with a date is your evidence that you did all that could be done. You are cleared of fineigling.

Finally, there is the matter of searching for markets, which is inescapable in anyway.

REWRITE

"MAY ON MACDUFF, AND MAY THE BEST MAN..."

A very healthy battle royal has been waged recently in the pages of the PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY between certain representatives of original publishers and reprint publishers on the one hand and other representatives of a new type of publisher: the publisher of 25¢ originals, i.e., new, never-before-published books that first appear as a 25¢ line. Without taking sides, we reprint some of the arguments. We believe they contain facts, and experience material that practical authors, who have to be hard headed in a materialistic world, should know about. (Incidentally, we do not think you will find these matters aired very often in other writers' magazines. If you do, we think it may be in part due to the fact that REWRITE has for ten years pioneered in a new type of professional journalism that aims to give you the facts, and experience material necessary to help you to become a responsible and self-supporting author in today's difficult world.)

LeBaron R. Barker, a top editor at Double-day & Co., opened the internecine warfare by charging that "continued publication of originals in the 25¢ field will undermine all of the structure of publishing (the 'whole' was his actual word.)

Here is the reply of Donald MacCampbell, a literary agent:

As one of the "certain agents" at whom Mr. Barker is pointing his finger in this connection, let me say that if he were on the selling end, instead of the buying end, he would certainly in the interest of his authors risk undermining said structure rather than continue to accept increasingly unattractive contracts from trade book publishers.

Within the past week, one publisher, who has been offering me contracts calling for 6 per cent of retail, and \$300 advances, threatened to boycott my agency if it continued to negotiate contracts with original 25-cent firms. Apparently the two authors involved, who have been doing two books a year for this firm and totaling under \$1,500 per book (including reprint earnings), are to twiddle their thumbs the rest of the year rather than accept four-book-a-year deals with an original 25-cent publisher paying \$2,000 advances against royalties. (Both of these authors customarily do six books a year.)

Freeman Lewis, of Pocket Books, also took the prosecutor's stand. He was quoted: "Many rejects or sub-standard mss. are available, for original publishing at 25¢." Again, Mr. MacCampbell for the defense:

For his information, let me say that my office leases approximately ten original 25-cent novels per month which are written to order by established names in the light fiction categories and contracted for on the usual basis of a few chapters and synopsis. Hardly rejects! As for Fawcett, the sub-standard book hasn't a chance there.

If inexpensive original publishing is sound and practical, business interests in the long run can't suppress it.

Whereas the hard cover publishers acquire book rights to pulp westerns and mysteries, and lease them in turn to Pocket Books, Bantam and Signet, Fawcett will not consider writing at the pulp level.

DONALD MACCAMPBELL

Bantam, you remember is served by the Curtis Publishing Co. & Fawcett is a pulp chain.

Next, the problem of subsidiary rights arose when Mr. Lewis was quoted as saying the sale of subsidiary rights from a 25¢ original "is possible--but very unlikely, and has rarely happened."

Up sprang Ralph Daigh, of Gold Medal Books, published by the powerful Fawcett chain:

In truth, Gold Medal Books buys only English-language book rights to a manuscript. All other rights stay with the author, and the full proceeds of any subsequent sales go to the author. Several of our authors have sold original books published by Gold Medal to motion pictures, and we exacted no tribute from these sales.

It is interesting that we have been approached by two hard-book publishers who want to reprint the original Gold Medal Book as a hard book for bookstore trade after publication by Gold Medal. We permit this one year after publication by Gold Medal, or sooner under unusual circumstances. Full proceeds of this sale go to the author.

Mr. Daigh next reiterated Mr. MacCampbell's estimate that there is more money & quicker to be had from the original 25¢ publishers. He alluded to a certain "ill-health" in the hard-book business. He "leaned," as we say in prize fighting, "against a short drive to the heart, then countered with a roundhouse from the floor."

That ill health might be diagnosed as simply a situation in which the publisher is trying to get \$3 or \$3.50 for a product that is not worth it.

Another distressing symptom of ill health in the hard-book business is the practice of a hard-book publisher submitting, prior to acceptance, a manuscript to a reprint house for the purpose of getting a contract and guarantee on a reprint issue before he signs a contract with the author for the original.

Too often, the hard-book publisher's 50 per cent fee of the reprint royalty is used to subsidize the original publication to a point where the hard-book publisher is guaranteed against loss on the hard-book edition. The evils, of course, are apparent, and no doubt such practice has led to the publication of inferior books by hard-book publishers. In effect, they say "This book is not a good book, worth \$3 or \$3.50, but my 50 per cent of the reprint money guarantees me against loss, so I will take a chance on it. Maybe my judgment is wrong, and maybe my readers are crazy."

RALPH DAIGH

It is an interesting fact which Elve can substantiate, that what I have edited here, was in our office before, but was not read until after I wrote the article about the Christopers on P. 9.

Doesn't what Mr. Daigh and Mr. MacCampbell say add up to or imply the same thing that I said on P. 9? "Easy money can be debilitating money." If you sidestep your risks, you're apt to miss your great opportunity.

All living is a risk, a challenge and adventure. If you play it "safe" as a writer or a publisher, you are likely to go soft. You'll miss then that extra something that makes a hero and an unforgettable piece of writing.. Leave out the spirit & you leave out all!

REWRITE

"YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU!"

A lot of inexperienced writers, and some, also, who are professionals, attach a lot of importance to "getting in on the ground floor" with every new magazine that springs up. We confess that this rush for money, for that's what it boils down to, leaves us cold. I've seen a lot of stock market "operators" burn their fingers in the same way. To get something for nothing has a universal appeal, I admit. But if you think the matter through, you will see that the motive is essentially an unworthy one. It is the greedy side of a writer coming out. Writers get the short end of the horn so often, it is a temptation to reach for the big end, when it appears to be leaning your way.

One of our contemporaries has had to justify itself for giving space to a couple of markets that turned out to be no good. This writers' magazine explains that it tried to balance the "ground floor" opportunity & the danger of a market blowing up in a writer's face. We do not feel especially proud we avoided approving these "markets". Probably, next time we will be wrong. The point really is that neither way is the inexperienced writer likely to benefit from a ground floor market.

On the one hand you get a fly-by-night or well-intentioned-but-insufficiently-financed and incompetent set-up. On the other you find a new magazine being started with much of the TIME, LIFE, etc. backing and editorial backing. Such a magazine has no time or interest in the amateur. It has quietly got an accumulation of mss. & pictures from the agents and known writers it wants. This inventory will take it over the first preparatory and experimental months. Moreover, an editor who is launching a new, untried magazine, doesn't have the time, or perhaps the reading staff to examine mss. from inexperienced writers. He has to keep right on the job, keeping the boat from sinking. So, you won't get as sympathetic a reading actually, from a ground floor book as you will from an editor who has some stabilized policies and the comparatively peaceful background needed for creative planning.

There are certain inside opportunities for the unknown or inexperienced writer, if he is willing to look for them. For instance, the smaller and perhaps specialized market, which is not sought out by the great majority of writers. It usually welcomes any writer who has something to say that will interest its readers. I have observed writers get a warm welcome that way many times.

Today, I had a chance to see the letters, that a successful poet has received regarding her first tries at fiction. Her experience is unusual because she has been able to hit both some of the top slicks long enough and often enough to get a high rate of payment, and also to sell a number of quality books. The slick poetry editors have recommended a careful reading on the part of their fiction colleagues. And the latter have given her a personal attention no inexperienced fiction writer could possibly get in the usual manner of presenting mss. cold.

Writers in both of these categories get a "ground floor" opportunity unequalled by, & lots more certain of results than that given by a new, untried, unseasoned magazine. The stock market operator who is really shrewd, tries to pick a stock like General Motors a short time after it has shown its worth, but long before it has become a "blue chip" issue. TV stocks today are speculative, but if you pick the right ones, you will, no doubt, have a conservative blue chip investment 20 years from now. That is because despite all the unfavorable publicity the Industry gets today, it serves an essential use in a modern world.

It is the same with magazines. If you can pick one that is as vital to national progress, even in an age of aviation, as trans-continental railroad systems are today, you have something. Many of the big slicks have had their ups and downs. But they have created valuable trade names and national goodwill. They have outlasted dozens of smaller stop-gap or temporary fad magazines. What's true of these giants is also true of smaller magazines that also fulfill a specialized functional job for readers.

Frustration

A LADY writing from Seattle says she is the author of a screen original and that, in approved fashion, she has endeavored to bring it to the attention of the studios by getting herself an agent.

Since the studios are clamoring for material, and since the lady shows in her letter to me, at least, that she is capable of producing English prose, it might be thought the agencies would display some mild curiosity. But I quote:

"To date, however, I have met with no success; of the 40 so-called motion picture representatives I wrote to, only two replied, stating that they would be only too glad to read my idea for a fee of \$10."

It is, alas, true that most of the stuff which comes to agents unsolicited is worthless; still, there has to be some way in which the unknown, talented author can obtain a hearing. As far as dealing with the picture companies themselves is concerned, Warner Brothers is the only one encouraging the direct approach.

Paul S. Nathan
PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY

The point, therefore, for the writer who wishes to build with a similar strength, lies not in a very receptive market that appears to offer him a speculator's chance to reap a fortune, and quickly. No, the real point is: (1) has he himself a product to sell; and (2) where is a market for that product that's not oversold?

Instead of looking at all of the other writers, who are elbowing one another and trying, very ineffectively, to run the shortest route, why do not you do what all the great runners of the past have done: plan a program that takes advantage of a dangerous opponent's weakness? Let the other writers waste an enormous amount of time firing wildly at (1) the SEP; (2) every new magazine that appears. You take stock of what you can write best. Then sharpshoot at the book that needs that stuff.

REWRITE

SOME NOTES ABOUT EDITORS

Helen F. Temple, who took over as editor, COMRADE, Nazarene Publishing House, 2928 Troost Ave., (Box 527), Kansas City 10, Mo., in August, seems to be a very friendly and helpful editor. She is a native of Hopkinton, Mass., starting point of the famous BAA marathon.

She made an interesting point to a member of the WCS Family recently. She said a story for her house must carry a forthright but not overdone religious emphasis. Christian living should be underlined and brought out without making it mawkish. "The emphasis, as you will notice," she wrote, "needs to occur only occasionally, and should not be so heavy that slows up the story." Good idea, naturally, would be to study some copies, to see how it is done. (As of December 5th, no issues representing Miss Temple's editorship, had yet appeared. They will shortly, I would imagine.)

STORY-A-DAY, Lucile Gulliver, 157 Newbury St., Boston 16, Mass. We received a number of letters from writers in December, regarding slow reading & report. We wrote to the editor, who also conducts an agency service at the same address. We received a prompt reply stating, "All replies received to date, save one have been answered immediately." Further explanation states that hundreds of mss. have been received, many writers have "sent from 5 to 15 stories simultaneously." (That is a silly procedure. Ed.) Miss Gulliver in her letter adds that three readers have attempted to cope with the rush of mss.

A fact concerning STORY-A-DAY that hasn't been publicized in writers' magazines, is a link with two organizations. "the Gen. Federation of Women's Clubs and the National Society of Crippled Children & Adults are endorsing and advertising STORY-A-DAY," states Miss Gulliver. Three issues of the GFWC paper have carried a double spread and the Society has sent out news releases to papers, and radio stations. The editor adds the Society and its affiliated Clubs "will share in the subscription returns" which will be used for charitable purposes. Since this set-up, combined with the unusually high payment for mss. promised by the original announcement, is newsworthy, we have asked Mr. Charles Manches ter, pres. of STORY-A-DAY, for further particulars.

Apparently we were misinformed as to Muriel Fuller's health. She states it is excellent.

J & F Feature Service, Box 8101, Iskwood, Cal., has sent us Bulletin K-0-1001, giving a list of its wants and a few do's & don'ts. This is a syndicate selling to house organs and is conducted by Felix Fellhauer, who is author of "Magazines In Review", a column in the Denver MONITOR. The syndicate is a "new venture" (letter from F.F., Sept. 12, 1950).

A FILLER MARKET AND OTHER NEWS

"Unfurled from the Show World" Editor, CORNET, 488 Madison Ave., NYC 22, is a humor-filler 2-page spread (several reprinted, or signed by well known columnists). So, state source. Pays on publication.

"Grin & Share It" Editor, (same address) is another CORNET filler feature. Fewer jokes reprinted here. Pays on publication.

Greeting Card Industry. An excellent background piece in Dec. 13th PATHFINDER Should be read by anyone writing for this field. It says average life span of a card is 1 year, and that the most popular cards are the ones that manage to project a "highly individualized sentiment that expresses just what the people feel, but don't know how to say." A good idea, then, it would seem to us, would be to study the different categories, which are steadily increasing, and then try to apply this formula. About 1.5 billion Christ-mas cards are bought annually now, the feature article estimates.

GBS Epitaph. When George Bernard Shaw was paid a last quiet tribute by his friends he was no longer the cocky, self-publicizing, ironic wit. A moving challenge to all writers was offered instead. His friend, Sir Sydney Cockerell read from "The Pilgrim's Progress": "My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it....Death, where is thy sting?....Grave, where is thy victory?"

FUND FOR BOB NEAL'S FAMILY

Several members of the UNH Conference staff who have been associated with Bob Neal over a period of years at Durham, requested that the editors of REWRITE serve as treasurers of a fund being raised for his family. Besides his widow (a member of the WCS Family), Bob's left five children, all in their 'teens or a good deal younger. We are happy to do this. The fund though unofficial, has the enthusiastic approval of Carroll S. Towle, director of the UNH Conference. Any sum will, of course, be gratefully accepted. Make checks or money orders payable to: "The R. M. Neal Fund", # William E. Harris, 50 West St., Lunenburg, Mass.

As Elizabeth Yates expressed it, "So this is a tangible way we can all express sympathy in a warm and heartfelt way." And to be good neighbors to the family of one of the best and most helpful teachers the UNH Conference Family has had in its long thirteen years. I am pleased to add that the first check went forward to Helen Neal on December 12th.

The Problem of Communication. T.S. Eliot became aware of it when he started to write plays, he stated at Harvard recently. Actually, it is always present, but writers writing for an unseen audience, aren't aware of it

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NEWS AT WCS HOUSE

In November Elva and Bill joined the Lunenburg chapter of the Grange. In the first week of December our garden was still sending edible greens into our kitchen. The old iron sink, about which several of the poets' workshop members spun verses earlier in the year, had been replaced with an almost equally as long white enamel sink, a rarity truly in this day of tiny box-sinks. Friendly Cousin Herman Ray, cabinet-maker by trade, also installed a longer window, so that "Tiny" (our junior editor) now can survey practically a 180° horizon line, including beautiful hills a mile or more away, as well as backyard activities of Billy 'Gee and his pals. A good neighbor adjusted the plumbing. So, we are indeed happy over our many blessings and improving little home.

We are embarrassed, but proud. In a period of about ten days around the end of November, we received approximately half-a-dozen recommendations of REWRITE and WCS from editors of national circulation newspapers or magazines and responsible teachers. Some of these were publicly given (Jessyca Russell, writing in her WRITERS' NEWSLETTER informed her readers we are the only service of this kind that she recommends.) Others were passed along to individual writers, who told us the facts. It makes us feel very humble to have such confidence bestowed upon us.

Equally gratifying were some comments from individual writers. One writer took the time to write in to Muriel Caswall, household editor of the Boston Sunday POST, to substantiate her fine comment on us. Muriel promptly printed it. One of our subscribers reported a sizable check at 2¢ a word, which resulted from a REWRITE tip. (We're very happy over that one.) And another subscriber, a writer who is always generous in her applause of other writers' successes, added to a letter following her reading of a friend's published article: "Did Bill help you with that one? He taught you well."

We pass these thoughts along, not in any spirit of self-admiration, because we never advertise, but simply as we do here at home, because some of the members of the WCS Family in other days have expressed interest, and very loyal pride in the parental activities.

New Publisher. Pilsbury Publishers, Lawrence H. Merchant, 10 W. 33rd St., NYC has been formed by a former manager of the Prentice-Hall textbook division. It will specialize in "packaged" courses for schools & adult use. An early one: personality development. Limited market, I'd say.

WHAT IS FREEDOM TO THINK?

ALTERNATIVE, a small pacifist paper, says that its Sept.-Oct. issue was barred from the mails by Postmaster Albert Goldman, because it urged resistance to the draft, and other war work, in what it terms "non-violent defiance" of laws that conflict with principle.

Larry Gara, a member of the Religious Society of Friends, and dean of Bluffton College, has been convicted of having counseled, aided and abetted" one of his students, who before he had met his new dean, had announced his "irrevocable" decision not to be a registrant for the draft. Two months following this announcement, Dean Gara was arrested for having merely advised his friend "Don't let them coerce you into violating—your conscience." (Translated into language Americans universally respect, this means, I would think: "Don't be yellow.")

REWRITE doesn't agree with the idea of Pacifism. Not in the light of present world events. But if we don't cultivate a conscience, we'll fail!

THE ANSWER is "trouble."

The answer, that is, to the question of why unknown authors of movie originals find it almost impossible to get agents or the film studios themselves to read their stories. The problem came up in this column, you may remember (PW, November 18), when a lady wrote from Seattle detailing her difficulties in finding anyone who would so much as glance at her original to see if it was any good.

One of the New York picture company story editors has phoned me to tell me in no uncertain terms why he, at least, is feeling un receptive at the moment to unsolicited material.

"Every time I've agreed to take a look at something from an unvoiced-for source," my friend said ruefully, "I've had reason to regret it. Yet when a manuscript arrived not long ago from a town in the Mid-West, I decided to give the author a break. As always, before assigning the story to a reader, we made a routine check of our files just to be sure the same property hadn't already been covered.

"It turned out in this case that it had been. Our copy of the synopsis from Hollywood established that and rendered pointless any further coverage on our part. I therefore returned the original to the author, with a polite note explaining why we were not reading it."

The story editor took a deep breath and went on: "A couple of days later I received an extremely offensive letter in which I was called a liar for saying the manuscript had been read at the studio. The author swore it had never been submitted anywhere in Hollywood.

admitted the lie, when I proved it to be one.)

"I wrote back, which was probably a mistake, and told the author the names of his characters and what the plot was about. How, I asked, could I know all this and still be the liar he said I was?

"The next letter I got was from a lawyer. He charged my company with having irregularly come into possession of his client's manuscript and copying it! We were threatened with a suit. Of course I communicated with the studio, which had somebody look up all the records and correspondence relating to the submission of the story. What had happened, I learned, was that a friend of the author's, living in Los Angeles and representing himself as an agent, had written to the studio asking if we would consider the yarn for pictures.

"I now wrote to the lawyer, giving him the facts and adding that we could supply proof in court, if necessary. There the matter rests. If you want to know in a single word why the movies, and agents dealing with the movies, are reluctant to encourage new authors, that word is 'trouble.' Furthermore, it takes a special technique to write originals, and I have yet to read a salable one from a non-professional."

On P. 13 we printed the first portion of this amusing sequence, that is really not so very funny because it explains what closes the doors to other writers.

This may be an "exceptional" horrible example in the minds of most writers. But I have known an example or two just like it. (The man who told me a ms. submitted 10 years earlier, was being seriously considered by publishers. I told him that couldn't be so, the stuff was tripe. He was mad but admitted the lie, when I proved it to be one.)

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THE CENTRAL MS. MARKET FILE

The FILE continues to grow. In spite of a very heavy month for both WCS and the WRITERS' BOOK CLUB, we have been able to add to the special categories as well as the total number of markets covered. We are also making a variety of checks and classification-routines standard so that we can catch each suspension. When we report markets or have questions fired at us, we don't like to offer suggestions that backfire. We aim to be right as high a percentage of the time as is humanly possible.

More and more writers are finding it is a smart thing to do, to help us keep tabs on a large number of markets. It takes them only a minute or two to slip a rejection or editorial comment into an envelop directed for us. But when we return the compliment with a suggestion that may pay off in a sale, they realize that such a good scout deed has its practical side.

Don't expect too much. Don't ask us to do special research to assemble an off-trail or specialized list of markets. Our File isn't 100% complete yet. And our time is limited. But so far as we can, we will help you with your problem. And all our work is certainly intended to be specific, to help writers to plan individual pieces and to make them the kind of mss. that editors will wish to buy. We have no interest in the generalized kind of ms. analysis that leaves out human considerations and fails to get down to cases.

NEW ENVELOPS AND OTHER MATTERS

Our new $6\frac{1}{2}$ (3 5/8 x $6\frac{1}{2}$) envelops are proving very popular with writers. We use them for filing market notes, paying bills, letters that don't run over on to a back page. A clean white, substance 20 envelop, its light and tough. Nice looking.

Cost? 70¢ per 100. We really should price them higher. You pay the postage, according to zone; but they weigh less than 1 pound a package of 100.

WCS Circulating Library. We don't have an estimate of the total circulation, but went into the hundreds of books circulated. You pay \$2 per year & postage both ways. You'll get a chance to read as many of the hundreds of new books on writing as you can digest. A number of the other new books reviewed here are also available.

The WCS Scholarship Fund. This fund which revolves in the sense that many of those we help, repay part or all of the help we offer them, has had a busy year. Although we haven't advertised it with more than a casual reference now and then, small gifts have continued to flow in. We are happy to have the fine opportunity thus to aid deserving folk, often in moments of great personal stress. It helps to make the WCS Family a real family.

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BOOKS OF LASTING WORTH

HOW TO WRITE A NOVEL. Manuel Komroff. \$6.50. A very fine study of writing a long piece of fiction. Much of it is applicable to shorter lengths and to writing in general. This author knows how to discuss writing practically and helpfully for the beginner & more experienced writer.

NEWS GATHERING & NEWS WRITING. R.M. Neal. \$6. A great book for any writer. It is a basically fundamental book for all non-fictional writers. This revised edition is a monument to a great teacher, who believed in the art of being thorough in every piece of writing.

ARTICLE WRITING & MARKETING. George L. Bird. \$5.50. There is a lot of very helpful, practical advice on writing and selling the article in this book. The author is a teacher in his own right after studying at the great Wisconsin University School of Journalism.

WRITERS ON WRITING. Ed. Herschel Brickell.. \$6.00. The handbook by the staff of the UNH Conference. It covers a wide number of general types of writing. It contains articles by Bill Harris on the Short Story, and also the Writer-Agent Relationship.

CREATIVE FICTION WRITING. Dorothy McCleary. \$2.50. An intensive analysis by an author of fiction herself. It helps you to understand the creative process.

THE ART OF WRITING FICTION. Mary Burchard Orvis. \$6.00. This book attempts to show what a writer's problems are in writing fiction. The specific examples taken from established and inexperienced writers are very helpful.

STORY WRITING. Edith Mirrieles. \$3.00. One of the great books about writing by a great teacher, who has long taught at Bread Loaf.

THE WRITER'S HANDBOOK. Ed. A.S. Burack. \$4.50. Articles and market lists. The most satisfying book on markets that we know of. It is, we believe, the best basis for building the personal list every writer should have.

KEEP YOUR INTEGRITY HIGH

The news about a widely read commentator on problems of child raising is shocking. But writers can learn a serious lesson from it. Every columnist knows when he builds a reputation for integrity and popularity, gifts of news and favors will come his way. Lots of persons with an axe to grind, will try a great many devices to get their names and a pet interest into the column.

The columnist (no writer, in fact) should, under any circumstances, be beholden to anyone. As a writer your first loyalty is ever and eternally to report the facts objectively, to be faithful to your readers' best interests. Never allow yourself to be bought.